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Movement Toward the Reorganization of Secondary Education

Charles Hughes Johnston

Professor of Secondary Education, University of Illinois

THERE is no single way to characterize adequately the movements for reorganizing public secondary education. Reorganization may refer to the matter of economy by the elimination of a grade; or it may refer to a change in methods of teaching, discipline and internal school management; or it may refer to a reorganization of content of instruction within the various courses; or still again it may refer to a change in administrative units within the twelve years of the public school system, such as we commonly mean to describe by the terms six-six plan or the six-three-three plan, etc. Generally current discussions, ever since the N. E. A. Standing Committee Report in 1905 on "Six Years' Course of Study," show a confusion as to the precise and distinguishable issues involved.

Omitting all consideration of the problems of the "junior-college annex" to public high schools, we may speak only of "reorganization" as it applies to the common twelve grades of public education. Within these grades any modification of the arrangement of eight grades of elementary and four of high school education represents some form of rearrangement, or "reorganization." In 1912 the U. S. Bureau reports nine types of segregated junior high schools—or combinations of grades, 5th to 10th, inclusive—and reports six combinations of higher grades representing senior high school arrangements. These and other existing forms of reorganization are indicative of unrest and experimentation. Likewise, theoretically different types of reorganization have been worked out in detail for cities of different sizes. The causes doubtless are more varied than the forms of reorganization, some of them

involving educational principles, some indicating adjustments for temporary convenience, some for economy merely, some topographical in character, while some again are merely fortuitous. It may be that none of the present types of reorganization is permanently significant as a type. Some educators, indeed, claim that they are all mere temporary makeshifts, heralding some profound and revolutionary form of fundamental school reorganization which will come into existence as we revise and refine our educational ideals.

The present extent of the movement for reorganization is of interest. The U. S. Commissioner and the National Bureau are publicly committed to this reorganization. The Committee on Economy of Time of the N. E. A. incorporate the same plan as a fundamental feature of their report. The National Association of State Universities has declared in favor of the same type of reorganization. A committee of the North Central Association last year presented a similar report to that body. This was adopted. The same association enlarged its committee and instructed them to present the details of further procedure at the 1915 meeting. Ten subcommittees of the N. E. A. Commission on Reorganization of Secondary Education are likewise at work upon these details of further developments in this direction. The State of New York as a State, through its separate official curriculums for the first six grades, the intermediate grades and the high school grades, virtually declares for its adoption. Likewise the State of California. Unanimous resolutions from the State Teachers' Association of Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana favor specifically the six-six plan of school organization. The State of Michigan, as well as did earlier the State of North Dakota, is apparently launching a campaign for a similar State-wide readjustment, and the State Superintendent has published a pamphlet containing not only urgent advice and lists of reasons for the change, but, in addition, definitely-worked-out plans for the reorganization of some of the courses.

Paralleling these official acts from State offices come the Universities of Michigan and Chicago, with their methods of accrediting and standards of entrance requirements readjusted so as to recognize and to sanction this new type of

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school organization. Add to these imposing actions of university faculties the recommendations of the directors of the School Surveys of New York City, of the State of Vermont, of Portland, of Boise, of Springfield, Ill., and of Butte, Mont., and the movement assumes proportions which demand the serious attention of students and administrators of education. From the U. S. Commissioner's Report, 1913, it should also be noted that there is a movement in the parochial schools which contemplates similar reorganization steps. Among cities which have adopted some form of reorganization we may note especially Palo Alto, Los Angeles and Berkeley, Cal.; Detroit, Grand Rapids and Saginaw, Mich.; Columbus and Dayton, Ohio; Portland, Ore.; Concord, N. H.; Trenton, N. J.; Boston, Fitchburg and Newton, Mass.; Minneapolis and Cokato, Minn.; Grafton, S. D.; Ogden, Utah; Rochester and New York, N. Y.; Lewiston, Idaho; Kansas City, Wichita, Garden City, Neodosha, Hutchinson and Fredonia, Kan.; Richmond, Evansville and other cities in Indiana, and Springfield and Quincy, and, in modified form, East Aurora, Decatur and Urbana, Ill.

The writer has drawn from current literature on this subject the following reasons for the change as advanced by its advocates, and has formulated as many reasons against this reorganization, furnished by those who prefer the present elementary-high school arrangement. It is instructive to note in the present stage of development that reorganization advocates are more careful to champion some changes rather than to tie themselves down to any particular rigid form of reorganization, and that those who resist the proposals of reform are chiefly attacking only the dangerous possibilities to which it may lead, each shifting the burden of proof to the other side.

SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS FOR A REARRANGEMENT OF THE SIX UPPER GRADES IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM, WITH THE FIRST SIX GRADES AN INDEPENDENT UNIT, ARE:

1. The scheme is fundamentally a plan for segregating the preadolescents and providing the unique environment required with the consequent development of the simple forms of student social activity.

2. It provides a better organization for the grouping of students with reference to their varying abilities and their physical, mental, social and moral traits at the most critical stage for this sort of diagnosis and treatment. Organized vocational guidance and placement is to be begun at this time.

3. This scheme provides for an instructorial organization with a better grade of women teachers and with more men in instructional force.

4. The teachers themselves also in this particular environment will develop better the particular traits required for this work.

5. It allows for a partial segregation of sexes with appropriate modification of teaching methods, of management and of courses.

6. The natural pedagogy of some subjects, like modern language, call for this readjustment. There is also need for an earlier correlation of English language and grammar with the foreign language and grammar, of arithmetic with elementary algebra and demonstrational geometry, and of history and geography. This beginning should be made in the segregated 7th grade, or 7th and 8th grades, or 7th, 8th and 9th grades.

7. It makes the whole school system more nearly a unit.

8. This would leave the elementary school of six grades still freer to teach easily, without the imposition of any scholastic standards the tool subjects as tools, as well as common fundamental ideals, and at the same time have most of its time and energy for the natural unrestrained and wholesome unrestricted exercises of imagination, play, construction, emotion, imitation, etc.

9. This would also leave the Senior High School proper free to develop with more distinctiveness of function genuinely differentiated curriculums of college preparatory, commercial, agricultural, manufacturing and the domestic science, sewing and homemaking arts.

10. The six-three-three plan makes possible a richer variety and greater number of courses for these children from twelve to fifteen years of age; and with this larger number of courses, most important of all, it allows at a better time that the first year of high school for a partial differentiation

of curriculums. (See the Portland, New York, Springfield and Butte Surveys.)

11. The pupils will thus, by semi or wholly departmental organization of instruction, be promoted by subject, get the benefit of contact with a special junior-high-school type of teacher, their individualities being thus better rounded out and developed, preserved from narrowness and uniformity—or conformity to one teacher's moulding.

12. The reorganization will provide such vocational insights and inducements that a larger per cent. will remain in school an additional year. It also postpones for one year the transportation difficulties of high school attendance, time, carfare and other obstacles.

13. It is cheaper, on same basis as ordinary 7th and 8th grade work (see Hanus' New York Report and Bulletin by Superintendent Rundlett of Concord, N. H.); or, if adequate, it makes for a better adjustment of per capita costs. (See E. H. Holland in Superintendent's Report of Louisville, 1912, and Francis, Portland Survey; Elementary, $40; Junior High School, $60; Senior High School, $80.) A town can often economically make over with proper equipment a grammar school or old high school building. (See Francis, Portland Survey, pp. 190-1.)

14. The reorganization provides for better and more continuous use of equipments for domestic science, manual training and vocational courses, with a better set of instructors who can, when necessary, alternate with the different classes. (Springfield Survey.)

15. It becomes possible for bright pupils to complete their public school work beyond the sixth grade in five instead of six years, whereas it is not often possible to do four years' work in three years under the present eight-four plan.

16. The "cycle" arrangement in the secondary school system of France and a similar arrangement of work in German secondary schools afford interesting analogies to the reorganization under discussion.

SOME OF THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST ANY REARRANGEMENT OF GRADES ARE:

1. In general, all the plans increase the difficulties of school organization and administration.
2. The child of this age will be confused in adjusting himself to the individual peculiarities of so many teachers.
3. More difficulty in placing responsibility for poor teaching, which will affect work in all subjects.
4. There will be much confusion incident to changing rooms.
5. Teachers of one subject become narrowed.
6. We can't make a thoroughgoing rearrangement and reorganization with mediocre teachers. Such intermediate teachers must have preparation of at least high school grade, and are not procurable.
7. The scheme requires specially gifted and trained principals who are not available.
8. The elementary school principals will object to taking away the "pride and inspiration of their schools." See also the high school principals, their numbers.
9. The upper-grade teachers who can't be promoted to this intermediate type of teaching, and who hence must be demoted to lower grades, and probably lower salary, if retained will strenuously oppose this "*injustice*" to them.
10. Inconvenienced parents will object.
11. It can't be accomplished in the smaller towns and cities.
12. It is merely a different name for essentially the same operation. There is no real change in educational principles; all good effects may be secured by *improving the present eight-four plan* of organization.
13. There is grave danger of losing the essentially personal influence of the teacher in this proposed distribution of personal responsibility among so many teachers.
14. There is equal danger that the many departmental teachers, ignorant of the child's all-day-round of school duties, will overwork the pupils by the very natural, practically inevitable over-emphasis on particular subjects.
15. It may be well also that the child's age advancement accords with our present grade advancements. It is likely

that it is not desirable to save a year or to change the content and method of work and discipline. An enforced rate of intellectual progress and more complicated type of intellectual exercise, which the intermediate or junior high school scheme requires, may be against the fundamental law of the child's rate of maturing. The 7th and 8th grade stages may be simply plateau levels in the individual's life, nodes, which cannot be done away with nor transformed by pedagogic device or administrative manipulation.

16. The proposed plan brings in the school lunch problem.

17. It tends to underestimate the necessary amount of drill work and acquisition of common ideas which the present 8 grade organization and 8 grade course of study aim to secure. secure.

SUMMARY.

As to evidence of success or failure of these experiments with reorganization, we have as yet little that could be called proof either way. Superintendent Bunker has carefully enumerated his initial obstacles encountered in Berkeley during the first two years, and has told how they all were gradually overcome. Superintendent Rundlett of Concord, N. H., has demonstrated by comparative statistics how average marks of whole classes were raised with the adoption and continuation of the scheme; how something like 33 per cent. more actual ground was covered during an identical period in such subjects as Latin, history and mathematics, and how the scheme proved to be considerably cheaper for Concord, N. H. Superintendent Francis of Los Angeles has shown us just how and how much it costs to transform an old grade building into a model junior high school. Professor Hanus has, as Director of the New York Survey, told that city how much cheaper the junior high school organization will be to the city. Superintendent Study of Neodesha has reported figures showing striking increase in enrollment and in promotion rates, decrease in elimination, and greater interest of the community in the school work following the adoption of the junior-senior high school arrangement. Superintendent Giles of Richmond, Ind., reports the good effect on general marks in all subjects of those boys who in junior high school were assigned to a

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partially differentiated curriculum. He reports also a system of advice and guidance, through committees of junior high school teachers, which seems to him to be typical of a sort of individual work not so easily done under the old form of organization. A thirty-five piece orchestra is, he thinks, typical of forms of junior high school activities which may be better developed under such a system of segregating the 7th, 8th and 9th grades.

The writer has found no evidence that any of these school experimenters would be willing to return to the old system. While he has found no reliable and adequate proof with which to convince those temperamentally inclined to doubt the promise in all these new plans of school administration, he has the impression that demonstrations and proofs will be forthcoming.